

# Red Seas, White Sands, Blue Skies: An American Citizens Services Newsletter



## Message from the Deputy Consul General

While crime in Saudi Arabia remains at levels below most major metropolitan areas in the United States, the American Citizens Services Unit has recently seen a slight increase in the number of U.S. citizens who reported that their passports and other valuables were stolen from their vehicles. To avoid becoming a victim, we encourage you to take charge of your own safety. Actively turning your thoughts and actions toward crime prevention can help you lower your chances of becoming a casualty. Many thefts of personal property from private cars can be avoided, simply by using a few precautions.

Remember to lock your car doors! This is the easiest thing to do, but a lot of people forget. When you park your car (even in your own driveway), lock the doors and roll up the windows. Thieves look for an easy opportunity and an unlocked car is one of the easiest.

Don't leave your valuables in plain view! Don't leave GPS's, cell phones, purses, laptops, or shopping purchases in plain view, even if you're parked at home. Secure them in the trunk, but make sure no one is looking when you do. And if you do put your items in the trunk, lock the doors since the trunk can be popped from inside the car. Better yet, take valuables out of the car entirely. Thieves can see a GPS holder, laptop stand or phone charger, etc. and may take the chance that the item is still in the car.

Protect personal information! Don't leave your passport in the car – even if its inside your briefcase - and don't keep any paperwork with personal or financial information in the car. If a thief steals your bag, they may not stop at that. Identity theft is easy with a passport or other personal information.

If your vehicle has been broken into report it promptly to the police.

Securing a car doesn't have to be expensive. Most of it is just common sense. Start with simply locking your doors and securing your valuables. Those two things alone will go a long way toward making sure you don't become a victim of theft.

**Cecelia K. El Khatib**



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## How to Reach Us

**The US Embassy is located in the Diplomatic Quarter, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.**

**Public hours:** Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, 1:00pm-3:30pm

*Schedule an Appointment:*  
[https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1)

[postcode=RID&appcode=1](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1)  
**Phone:** (966)(1)488-3800

### US Consulate Jeddah

**Public hours:** Saturday/Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday, 1:00–3:00pm

*Schedule an Appointment:*  
[https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=JDD&appcode=1)

[postcode=JDD&appcode=1](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=JDD&appcode=1)  
**Phone:** (966)(2)667-0080

### US Consulate Dhahran

**Public hours:** Saturday through Wednesday, 1:00-3:30 pm

*Schedule an Appointment:* [https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=dhr&appcode=1)

[postcode=dhr&appcode=1](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=dhr&appcode=1)  
**Phone:** (966)(3)330-3200

Please see Saudi Arabia's updated Country Specific Information - Jan 2013

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1012.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1012.html)

**Upcoming Holiday Closures**

May 25, 2013 – Memorial Day

**REMINDER: American Citizens Services (ACS) All Appointment System:** The ACS Units at the Embassy and Consulates General require appointments for all non-emergency, routine services. This is a worldwide policy for all U.S. embassies and consulates. Routine services include passport and additional pages applications, requests for Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, Social Security card and benefit applications, and notarial services.



**The State of Illinois will conduct a Special General Election on Tuesday, April 9, 2013, for the 2nd Congressional District in order to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Jesse Jackson, Jr.**

This district consists of parts of the City of Chicago, south suburban Cook County, Kankakee County, and Will County.

**Every military and overseas voter from the 2nd Congressional District who wishes to participate in this election must submit a new Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) for 2013 elections if you have not already done so this year.** Your FPCA can be submitted electronically or by mail or fax. You may choose to use the automated tool at [www.FVAP.gov](http://www.FVAP.gov) to prepare and print your forms. FPCA forms are also available in embassies, consulates, and military installations around the world.

Be sure to indicate on the FPCA how you would like to receive your absentee ballot (electronically or by mail or fax). For this election, if you choose to receive your ballot by mail, your ballot will be sent by express mail delivery and information about express delivery return will be included with your ballot. The State of Illinois will also allow you to receive and return your ballot electronically for this Special General Election only.

#### Important Dates

Ballot sent to you from election authority (if requested by March 8)	March 8, 2013
FPCA request deadline for overseas citizens	March 11, 2013
FPCA request deadline for Uniformed Services personnel, their spouses and dependents, U.S. government employees outside of the U.S., and non-resident civilians	April 1, 2013
Voted paper ballot postmarked to election authority	Before midnight, April 8, 2013
Voted ballot transmitted to election authority if sending ballot by electronic method	7 p.m., CST, April 9, 2013
Voted paper ballot received by election authority	April 23, 2013

If you applied in a timely fashion for an absentee ballot and are concerned about not receiving your ballot in time to vote, use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). The FWAB automated tool is available at [www.FVAP.gov](http://www.FVAP.gov). The FWAB is also available in embassies, consulates, and military installations around the world.

To determine the status of your absentee ballot request, contact your local election office. You can find contact information for your voting jurisdiction at <https://www.fvap.gov/r3/jurisdictions/IL>. You can also track the status of your ballot at <https://move.elections.il.gov/>. If you choose to return your ballot (including the FWAB) by **mail**, your voted ballot must

be postmarked before midnight, April 8, 2013, or shipped via commercial carrier prior to Election Day, and the ballot must be received by the election authority by April 23, 2013. If you choose to return your **ballot electronically** for this election, the ballot **must be received by 7 p.m., CST, April 9, 2013**. Your local election official will provide you with instructions for returning your ballot or your FWAB using these electronic methods.

**Go to [www.FVAP.gov](http://www.FVAP.gov) to fill out and print your forms today!** Additional information on the completion and submission of these forms is available on the site along with Illinois voter-specific information.

#### **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts will hold a special primary election for U.S. Senate on Tuesday, April 30, 2013, to fill the seat vacated by Senator John Kerry.**

You can register to vote and request an absentee ballot by mail, fax, or electronically using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) automated tool at <http://www.fvap.gov/request/request-ma.html>. Do not forget to indicate on the FPCA your party preference as well as how you would like to receive your absentee ballot (by mail, fax or email).

Uniformed Services personnel, their spouses and dependents, and U.S. government employees serving outside the territorial limits of the United States must submit a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to request an absentee ballot.

**Please note that you will not receive a ballot automatically, even if you voted in the November 6, 2012, General Election.**

If you are concerned about not receiving your ballot in time to vote, use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB, SF-186). The FWAB automated tool is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/request/request-ma.html>. The FWAB is also available in embassies, consulates, and military installations around the world.

#### Important Dates

FPCA request deadline	Before 12 PM EDT, April 29
Voted ballot received by election authority	Before 8 PM EDT, April 30

To determine the status of your absentee ballot request, contact your local election office. You can find contact information for your voting jurisdiction at .Your voted ballot must be received **before 8 PM EDT on April 30, 2013. The Special General Election will be held Tuesday, June 25, 2013. Go to [www.FVAP.gov](http://www.FVAP.gov) to fill out and print your forms today!** Additional information on the completion and submission of these forms is also available, as well as Massachusetts voter-specific information. Find a list of county contact information at <https://www.fvap.gov/r3/jurisdictions/MA..>



## **IRS Tax information and tips**

The following changes are discussed in more detail in Publication 17, *Your Federal Income Tax For Individuals*, and the Instructions for Form 1040.

**Exemption Amount:** The amount you can deduct for each exemption has increased. It was \$3,700 for 2011. It is \$3,800 for 2012.

**Standard Deduction Amount:** The standard deduction for some taxpayers who do not itemize their deductions on Schedule A of Form 1040 is higher for 2012. The amount depends on your filing status, whether you are 65 or older or blind, and whether an exemption can be claimed for you by another taxpayer. The basic standard deduction amounts for 2012 are: Head of Household — \$8,700; Married Filing Jointly — \$11,900; Qualifying Widow(er)s — \$11,900; Married Filing Separately — \$5,950; and Single — \$5,950.

**Alternative minimum tax (AMT):** The tax laws provide tax benefits for certain kinds of income and allow special deductions and credits for certain kinds of expenses. The alternative minimum tax (AMT) attempts to ensure that anyone who benefits from these tax advantages pays at least a minimum amount of tax. The AMT is a separately figured tax that eliminates many deductions and credits, thus increasing tax liability for an individual who would otherwise pay less tax. The tentative minimum tax rates on ordinary income are percentages set by law. For capital gains and certain dividends, the rates in effect for the regular tax are used. You may have to pay the AMT if your taxable income for regular tax purposes plus any adjustments and preference items that apply to you are more than the AMT exemption amount.

**For 2012, the AMT exemption amount is increased to** \$50,600 for single and head of household taxpayers; \$78,750 if married filing jointly or a qualifying widow(er); and \$39,375 if married filing separately.

### **Reporting capital gains and losses on new Form 8949:**

In most cases, you must report your capital gains and losses on Form 8949. Then you report certain totals from that form on Schedule D (Form 1040).

**Foreign financial assets:** If you had foreign financial assets in 2012, you may have to file Form 8938 with your return. Check <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8938.pdf> for details.

**Foreign Earned Income:** The maximum foreign earned income exclusion amount available on Form 2555 or Form 2555-EZ has increased to \$95,100 for 2012. For the housing exclusion and/or deduction, refer to Publication 54 and Form 2555 Instructions.

**Note:** If you claim the foreign earned income exclusion or the foreign housing exclusion on Form 2555 or Form 2555-EZ, you must figure your tax using the *Foreign Earned Income Tax Worksheet* to figure the amount to enter on Form 1040, line 44. If you are required to attach Form 6251 to your tax return, use the *Foreign Earned Income Tax Worksheet* provided in the Instructions for Form 6251.

## **Red Seas, White Sands, Blue Skies: An American Citizens Services Newsletter**

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien, the rules for filing income, estate, and gift tax returns and for paying estimated tax are generally the same whether you are in the United States or abroad.

Your type and amount of income, filing status, and age determine whether you must file a U.S. income tax return. Generally, you must file a return if your gross income from worldwide sources (excluding U.S. social security benefits) is at least:

<b>If your filing status is:</b>	<b>And at the end of 2011 you were:</b>	<b>THEN file if your gross income was at least:</b>
Single	Under 65 or older	\$9,750 \$11,200
Married Filing Jointly	Under 65 (both spouses) 65 or older (one spouse) 65 or older (both spouses)	\$19,500 \$20,650 \$21,800
Married Filing Separately	any age	\$3,800
Head of Household	Under 65 65 or older	\$12,500 \$13,950
Qualifying Widow(er) with dependent child	Under 65 65 or older	\$15,700 \$16,850

Please refer to the Form 1040 Instructions for further information.

### **EXTENSIONS TO FILE**

*Taxpayers generally must file a 2012 tax return by April 15, 2013. U.S. citizens and residents with tax homes outside of the United States on April 15, 2013, however, are automatically granted a two-month extension to June 17, 2013 to file a tax return. Any tax due though must be paid by April 15, 2013 (or earlier if you are subject to estimated tax) in order to avoid penalties and interest.*

### **TAX ASSISTANCE**

The Internal Revenue Service provides tax assistance through a regional office located at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, France.

Phone: +33 (0)1 43 12 25 55 ; Fax: +33 (0)1 43 12 23 03  
Monday- Friday, 9:00 am-12:00 pm and 1:30 pm- 3:30 pm —  
Closed French and American holidays  
Email: [irs.paris@irs.gov](mailto:irs.paris@irs.gov)

Mail: U.S. Embassy – Internal Revenue Service  
2, Avenue Gabriel, 75382 Paris Cedex 08, France  
Phone: +1 (267) 941-1000 Fax: +1 (267) 941-1055  
Website: <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Help-With-Tax-Questions--International-Taxpayers>





**REMINDER: U.S. TREASURY RE-QUIRES ELECTRONIC FEDERAL BENEFIT PAYMENTMENTS:**

If you still receive a paper check for your Social Security or other federal benefit payments, you are out of compliance with the law. The Treasury Department requires federal benefit payments to be made electronically - through direct deposit to a bank or credit union account or to the Direct Express® Debit MasterCard® card. For complete information on how to sign up for direct deposit or prepaid debit card, visit: <https://www.godirect.gov/gpw/index.gd>.

**Riyadh Bans Smoking in Tourist Facilities**



According to media reports, Saudi Arabia's General Commission for Tourism and Antiquities has imposed a ban on smoking at all tourism facilities. The ban includes hotels, furnished apartments, travel agencies and all closed areas where tourism activities are organized and also includes all government buildings, public establishments, cafés, restaurants, shopping malls and enclosed crowded areas.

**Daylight Savings Time in USA – Begins March 10, 2013 and ends November 3, 2013:**

DST caused widespread confusion from 1945 to 1966 for trains, buses and the broadcasting industry in the US because many states and localities were free to choose when and if they would observe DST. Congress decided to end the confusion and establish the Uniform Time Act of 1966 that stated DST would begin on the last Sunday of April and end on the last Sunday of October. However, states still had the ability to be exempt from DST by passing a local ordinance. The DST schedule in the US was revised several times throughout the years, in which the DST schedule period lasted for about seven months from 1987 to 2006. The current schedule began in 2007 and follows the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which extended the period by about one month where DST starts on the second Sunday in March and ends on the first Sunday in November. Currently, most of the US observes DST except for Hawaii and most of Arizona, and the US insular areas of Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam.

**Online Services Available with a my Social Security Account**



The Social Security Administration is expanding the services available with a *my Social Security* account, a personalized online account that people can use beginning in their working years and continuing throughout the time they receive Social Security benefits. More than 60 million Social Security beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients can now access their benefit verification letter, payment history, and earnings record instantly using their online account. Social Security beneficiaries also can change their address and start or change direct deposit information online.

Social Security beneficiaries and SSI recipients with a *my Social Security* account can go online and get an official benefit verification letter instantly. The benefit verification letter serves as proof of income to secure loans, mortgages and other housing, and state or local benefits. Additionally, people use the letter to prove current Medicare health insurance coverage, retirement or disability status, and age. People can print or save a customized letter. This new online service allows people to conduct business with Social Security without having to visit an office or make a phone call, and very often wait for a letter to arrive in the mail. It also will reduce the time spent by employees completing these requests and free them to focus on other workloads.

People age 18 and older can sign up for an account at [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount). Once there, they must be able to provide information about themselves and answers to questions that only they are likely to know. After completing the secure verification process, people can create a *my Social Security* account with a unique user name and password to access their information.

People age 18 and older who are not receiving benefits can sign up for a *my Social Security* account to get a personalized online Social Security *Statement*. The online *Statement* provides eligible workers with secure and convenient access to their Social Security earnings and benefit information, and estimates of future benefits they can use to plan for their retirement. In addition, the portal also includes links to information about other online services, such as applications for retirement, disability and Medicare.

For more information, please go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount).

**Are you or is someone you know a newcomer to Saudi ?**

Help newcomers to the Kingdom by reminding them to register with the Embassy or nearest Consulate using **STEP** online at:

<https://step.state.gov/step/>

This free service offers registered U.S. citizens updates on important regional issues, travel warnings and alerts, and provides a point of contact for citizens and their families in case of emergency.

# KIDS CORNER

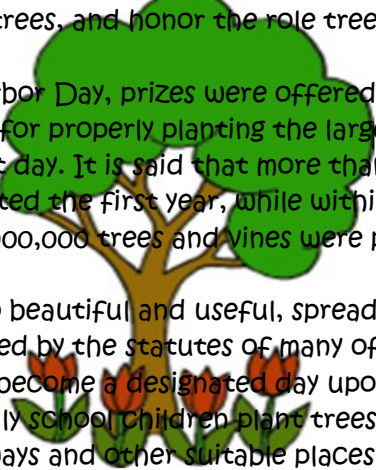
## National Arbor Day -- April 26

Arbor Day is America's National Tree Holiday, founded by J. Sterling Morton in Nebraska in 1872. This is the day we set aside to plant trees, educate people about the importance of trees, and honor the role trees play in our daily lives.

For the first Arbor Day, prizes were offered to counties and individuals for properly planting the largest number of trees on that day. It is said that more than a million trees were planted the first year, while within sixteen years over 350,000,000 trees and vines were planted in the State.

This custom, so beautiful and useful, spread rapidly, and now is recognized by the statutes of many of the States. Arbor Day has become a designated day upon which people and especially school children plant trees and shrubs along the highways and other suitable places.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon proclaimed the last Friday in April as National Arbor Day. All 50 states celebrate Arbor Day. The celebration dates may vary in each state due to the local climate.



Varieties of Trees

SNJFYI  
KLGXPSCTCV  
FJKDOZXRPSQJRJ  
ZABEFMIHVLPJOKMSI  
WSVYLPLOOXDNHUSAGGHECM  
TKYPEVDUTCTCIMEYRREHCRIB  
SNEERGVEIYAWCFIUZULIG  
SPGIDUKNKCFPOPLARAMMRJOVG  
SODHYVIAAII LONGAMGAJXPVYON  
DKIORGPNNDREDOOWGODMZFSLOIUS  
NFDZQOVZKNKAOTUDWARLLAIIKXZJM  
IAQIBAEZVYWMWHZJVEHKGJMWORSRCW  
TLQTFNLKHOQAMDEUUTWXLDOVREVJND  
JMLKFGCTMRMTZLIIQSUOREFINOCLUZ  
XOZKAUQHPCFCAVHTFGLAHAJIDZFMCW  
LJXIJR  
OPXNMS  
KXFFDP  
SFOTBR  
VPFAVK  
SZXPLZ  
XRBEMZ  
EZOUZY  
FNKWKL  
OMBPEO  
COSBJOHR  
JTVVXYRE  
NXNYZUGEY  
EOSZNRNNY  
AYGZMWTBNCOI

Ash	Oak
Birch	Orange
Cherry	Pine
Coniferous	Plum
Deciduous	Poplar
Dogwood	Rosewood
Elm	Spruce
Evergreen	Sycamore
Magnolia	Tamarac
Maple	Teak

## Spring — March 20

Spring is the season between winter and summer. It's the time of year when life begins again in nature. In the Northern Hemisphere, spring begins on the day the center of the sun is directly over the equator. Usually, on March 20th, the sun crosses the equator and starts northward. As it travels north, its rays strike the northern countries more directly each day. Spring lasts until June 20 or 21.

In the Southern Hemisphere, spring begins in September and ends in December. Spring begins a few hours earlier in Leap Year.



## RIDDLES

- Which is the longest word in the English language?  
—Smiles; because there is a mile between the first and last letters.
- What is that which happens twice in a moment and not once in a thousand years?—The letter M.
- What is that which everybody has seen but will never see again?—Yesterday.
- What belongs to yourself, but is used more by your friends than by yourself?—Your name.

